

REMARKS

As discussed below, Applicants have incorporated subject matter indicated allowable by the Examiner into independent claims 1 and 11 to expedite prosecution and to place the present application in condition for allowance. Moreover, Applicants have cancelled claims 3 and 17, and rewrote allowable claim 9 in independent form. Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-2, 4-16, and 18-20 will remain pending in the present application. Reconsideration of the present application as amended is respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected independent claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hottovy et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,183,866). Office Action, pages 6-7. This rejection is believed to be moot in light of the amendment made to the claim 11, incorporating subject matter indicated as allowable by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, and allowance of claim 11.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-7, 10, 11 and 18-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as “being unpatentable over US 5180558 to Takakarhu, alone or in view of the acknowledged prior art as discussed herein in the Background of the Invention (specification, page 2).” Office Action, Pages 3-5. In addition, the Examiner rejected claims 2 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as “being unpatentable over Takakarhu as applied to claims 1 and 11, and further in view of US 4257533 to Matsuyama et al.”

Office Action, Pages 5-6. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's assertion of "acknowledged prior art" in the Background section of the specification. However, these rejections are believed to be moot in light of the amendments made to the claims 1 and 11. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), and allowance of claim 1, 2, 4-7, 10, 11, 16, and 18-20.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants graciously acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Specifically, the Examiner stated:

Claims 3, 8, 9, 12-15, and 17 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Examiner has not, as of the date of this Office action, located or identified any prior art documents that can be used to render the process as defined by said claims anticipated or obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art.

Office Action, Pages 6-8.

Claim Amendments

Again, in view of the allowable subject matter noted above, Applicants amended independent claims 1 and 11, and cancelled claims 3 and 17 to expedite prosecution and to place the present application in condition for allowance. Applicants amended independent claims 1 and 11 to incorporate the indicated-allowable subject matter of dependent claims 3 and 17, respectively. Further, as mentioned above, Applicants rewrote indicated-allowable claim 9 in independent form. Applicants note that certain

aspects of the original claims are still believed to be distinguishable over the cited reference and, thus, Applicants may wish to file a continuation application to pursue this subject matter. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims 1-2, 4-16, and 18-20.

Conclusion

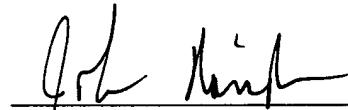
In view of the amendments and remarks set forth above, the Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview will help speed this application toward issuance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Payment of Fees

Applicants rewrote one dependent claim in independent form. However, the total number of independent claims does not exceed three in the present application. Therefore, Applicants believe that no fees are due. However, if a fee is determined to be currently due, the Commissioner is authorized to charge this fee and any other fees which may be required to Deposit Account No. 06-1315; Order No. CPCM:0018/FLE (210319US01).

Respectfully submitted,

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